



Curtin University

A Curtin Ignition Case Study

Tap into Safety
Dr Susanne Bahn

This initiative is based on the successful Ignite program managed and delivered by the University of Cambridge Judge Business School's Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (CfEL)



Centre for
Entrepreneurial Learning

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“Ensure to take your blood pressure medication! Ignition will get your brain firing so fast that you can’t wind down at the end of each day. It’s emotionally exhausting but you can’t miss a word – everything within the program is crucially important to set you on the right path.” Sue Bahn



“What especially amazed me about Ignition was the access to people and the ability to build my networks. I met a group of people who wanted to help me and did not have their hand out for something in return.”

When Sue Bahn attended Ignition in 2013 she had previously run both a small business and a start-up business; in fact she had run a small lifestyle, ‘Mum and Dad’ business for over 20 years. However, she confessed, she had no idea how to develop a growth business with the potential to develop international markets, raise equity funds and seek a trade sale ‘exit’. So coming to Ignition with little more than what was a technical concept, Sue could, by day two of Ignition, see that the ‘easy’ part was done – that of the product invention – but the ‘hard’ part was still a long way off – that of successful commercialisation. In her words, Ignition opened up “a can of worms”, and made her realise just how much she still needed to think about, do, plan and prepare her product for market. It opened Sue’s eyes to the journey ahead.



Sue’s business, Tap into Safety, develops for her clients customised, interactive hazard perception and safety training apps. The applications are developed using the client’s content to engage staff with perceived real-life hazard scenarios, with which they can easily identify. Instead of using drawn graphics, Tap into Safety uses photography to make scenarios look as ‘real life’ as possible. Users interact with the application via a tablet or web-browser. It is unlike previous health and safety teaching methods that rely on classroom teaching, e-learning and multiple choice assessment. Tap into Safety encourages users to connect with real-life content and real-life scenarios in a fun and interactive way, drawing on gaming techniques, where their progress is self-paced and measured. Its objective is to instil behavioural change in staff to reduce the risk of workplace accidents, rather than to merely educate.

The concepts behind the development of Tap into Safety are based on years of world-class research, and the consultancy work previously undertaken by Sue and her husband,

For Sue personally, Ignition “awakened the beast”. It inspired her “I can do it!” mindset, and gave her the confidence to leave a secure role in academia to go it alone and start Tap into Safety.

Geoff as part of their business KIS Safety. From 2003, KIS Safety has provided risk management solutions to business, to ensure the well-being of their employees. Sue had 11 years consultancy expertise in work health and safety practice and processes, risk management, supervision and leadership training and vocational education training in the construction and mining industries. Geoff, Sue’s co-director and CFO of Tap into Safety, comes from a long career within service-orientated businesses, with many years as a management trainer, productivity improver and safety consultant.

It took nine months after the end of Ignition for Sue and Geoff to ‘tidy up their affairs’ and officially start Tap into Safety; progress since has been rapid. As is usual with software development, they began by developing the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and used that to seek customers, soon finding potential customers keen to engage but seeking customised modifications, all of which extended development times and thus the time to revenue. With an extension to their mortgage providing the funds needed to run the business, Sue and Geoff have had some sleepless nights, but as Sue says, “I’m confident that

AT A GLANCE

Business name:
Tap into Safety Pty Ltd

Web address:
www.tapintosafety.com.au;
www.supervisionsafetyleadership.com;
www.wellbeingmentalhealth.com

Number of employees:
2 Founders + 7 staff

Founders:
Dr Susanne Bahn, Geoffrey Bahn

Date incorporated: July 2014

Ignition year: 2013

we are at the beginning of a scaleable business. That keeps us going and focused!”

Changes to the software requested by customers include the use of 2D photography; with the latest development, being 360/180-degree panoramic functionality that ‘transitions’ between work areas. Sue says that they are constantly listening to customer needs and are ‘future selling’ updates to the technology. A number of customers, such as Lendlease, the Australian Asphalt Pavement Association and Chandler Macleod Group who were waiting for the 360 degree panoramic capability, have now placed orders. Beyond these developments, the next stage is for Tap into Safety to utilise augmented reality (AR), and, with that market still in formation Sue is not rushing to align with one single AR provider but is keeping her options open.

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In May 2015, Tap into Safety was announced as one of two WA-awarded recipients of an Accelerating Commercialisation grant; receiving \$95,000 for the development of the new product iterations, matched by the funds that were received from their 2014-15 R&D tax credit. They were also the first to finish the grant in Australia. The grant has enabled them to move development from the out-sourced China based development team and recruit their own development team. Jacob, their son, who joined as lead developer in June 2015 (his bedroom converted into his office over a weekend), Grant and Christian joined in September 2015; and Boyd in January 2016. They have since recruited Jack to join the software development team and used the ACS Foundation Scholarship to help fund this position.

The team started working together from Sue and Geoff's four-bedroom house in Gwelup; Sue and Geoff had an office upstairs and the development team took up much of the space on the ground floor. This home-based office helped to keep overheads low in the early days but it also meant that Sue and Geoff were office cleaners on Saturday morning and Sue was back operating as Tap into Safety CEO Saturday afternoon as part of her sixty hour working week. In mid-2016 it all got too crowded and they moved to offices in Joondalup.

Of Ignition Sue says, "Doing a start-up is not for the faint hearted; growing the business, building it to be an international entity is difficult. Despite my previous business experience, Ignition still made me feel, 'Oh my goodness, I have so much to learn!' In my previous business I had registered a trademark but never lodged a patent. I'm a technical expert in the field of health and safety and I knew my product area well but I had never considered marketing, team building or intellectual property protection, and here I am now in my early 50s getting to grips with social media and surprising myself by regular tweeting!"



For more information:

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